



## A forward-looking Young Professionals Council (YPC)

*'If you are planning for a year, grow rice; if you are planning for a decade, grow trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, grow people.. Chinese Proverb*

The above variant of a Chinese proverb speaks directly to the Young Professionals Council (YPC), which is one of the SAIMM's strategic initiatives. It is a long-standing tradition of the SAIMM to dedicate the April edition of the *Journal* to student papers selected for publication from the annual SAIMM Student Colloquium. Last year we could not host the Student Colloquium due to the nationwide #FeesMustFall student protests, which disrupted academic programmes in universities to varying degrees. Fortunately, most universities managed to save the academic year and students were able to complete their final-year projects. This special edition of the *Journal* presents final-year student project papers that were selected by the respective university departments.

In the December 2016 edition of the *Journal*, I expressed my optimism for the year 2017. My optimism can stretch way beyond 2017 when I consider the activities of the YPC. This year the SAMREC/SAMVAL Lecture and the Young Professionals Conference were successfully organized by the YPC. The YPC will host a third event, the Entrepreneurship in Mining Forum, later in the year, and their last event for the year will see a return to the Student Colloquium. The organizational capacity of the YPC gives us the assurance that the future of the Institute is in good hands.

Another positive development is the YPC's Graduate Employment Database (GED), which enables the Institute to connect unemployed graduates with work opportunities. Since its launch in 2015, about 300 active SAIMM young graduate members have registered on the database and 13 advertisements have been circulated to alert them to career, internship, or education opportunities.

The holistic development of young professionals is critical for the future of our Institute and the industry. The SAIMM's mentoring programme, which connects young professionals with experienced practitioners in a one-to-one mentoring relationship, is in its second year of existence. Our programme has matched 82 protégés to 64 mentors. This is a truly global programme because the registered participants are from different countries including the UK and USA. This programme allows young professionals to build connections and develop into future leaders of our mining industry.

The YPC has established itself as a valuable part of the Institute capable of delivering on SAIMM objectives. It has, through its *ex-officio* representation on Council, injected fresh energy into the Institute.

The debate on free tertiary education is likely to continue this year. The SAIMM has always supported the principle of making education accessible to students who may not have the financial means to meet all their educational needs but who demonstrate the potential to do well academically. The SAIMM Scholarship Trust Fund (STF) has contributed about R3 million towards the education of students in mining and metallurgy over the last 12 years. This year we have committed a further R220 000 to this worthy cause. As you read this edition of the *Journal*, please take note of the quality of students coming out of our universities, and imagine the tragedy if any of the students featured in this issue were not able to graduate due to unpaid fees. I therefore urge you to donate to the STF so that we can help students become young professionals, who as I have pointed out, are the key to the future of the Institute. As with the Chinese proverb, let us join hands in growing people as we plan for the long-term future of the Institute.

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